

## **Istook Introduces School Prayer Amendment**

*Washington, DC* – Today Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Okla.) and 74 House cosponsors introduced the School Prayer Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The proposed constitutional amendment would permit but not mandate school prayer and other religious expression on public property. The proposed text (73 words), reads:

**“To secure the people’s right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience:**

- Neither the United States nor any State shall establish any official religion, but the people’s right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, and traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed.**
- The United States and the States shall not compose school prayers, nor require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity.”**

**“Even though it’s Christmas, and is a critical time for our country, Americans are confused and upset by the religious intolerance. There’s widespread confusion, thanks to conflicting court rulings, fear of legal costs, and the intolerant zealots who claim they are ‘offended’ when freedom of speech includes religious speech. This amendment will stop the harassment and intimidation of those lawsuits, and free the American people to honor and respect God in public places,”** said Istook. He cited several recent incidents involving everything from the words “God Bless America” to students exchanging Christmas cards.

Although similar measure to the Religious Freedom Amendment that received a majority vote in 1998, the School Prayer Amendment is narrower, focusing strictly on prayer and religious heritage.

A constitutional amendment must pass by two-thirds in the House and Senate, and then be ratified by three-fourths of the nation’s 50 states, with no approval or other role involving the President or the Governors.